

CURRENT COMMENT

Local and National
By J. H. Lowry

MARCH REFLECTIONS.



And so March has come again. I hadn't thought of it until today, since I was out of town on "the bloody first" and the bill collectors had no opportunity to remind me that March had marched in and February's accounts were due. But this morning as I passed by the yards of my home town I saw the long-stemmed yellow jonquil craning their necks and heard them whispering airy nothings to the modest violets. And this afternoon I went to the woods. There the red buds had hung their crimson banners on the hillsides and in the valleys. The robins were in the woods, and I saw that already the deeper crimson had come upon their pretty breasts. And so I knew that March, the first month of spring, had come, and I breathed a sigh of regret that wasn't a young man, so that my fancy could no more "turn to thoughts of love."

March is the third month on our calendar, and this is a reminder that somewhere in the dim and musty past something very bad was charged up against March, for March once stood at the head of the battling list and was the first month. The Romans put March first and kept her there so long as Rome's was the master hand—and this in spite of the fact that it was in March that great Caesar fell. But somewhere in the seventh century March made a very poor batting average and was demoted to third place by the unforgiving, hardheaded barons of England. English history is silent on the follies of many of her kings and queens and nobles, and it is well that it is, and for the simple reason that English history doesn't tell us why March was dropped from first to third place on the calendar, we are sure March did something that was far from proper, and that spreading the couch of silence England also drew the mantle of charity over the indiscretions of March. Anyway, the sun in its diurnal turnings has taken us through one-sixth of the year, and brought us face to face with March; and March means politics, love and millinery bills.

The name March is a patronymic, for it is March, the son (or daughter) of Mars." The ancient gods were as vain as the people of our own day, and wanted something, or somebody, named for them. Mars seems to have been a pretty good fellow at the beginning, and possibly this was why, in the naming of months, his name, like Ben Adim's, he dall the rest. The first Mars was an agricultural deity,

and did something really worth while. He toiled in the fields from the rising to the setting of the sun. He grew corn and wheat, he raised cattle and sheep, and did much toward keeping down the high cost of living. But a war came on, and Mars, being a healthy, strapping fellow, showed to splendid advantage in a uniform, and when armed with battle axe and spear was truly a majestic figure. The Roman ladies, like all the ladies of all the nations, fell for the fine physique and the braided uniform. Roman youths who believed in the constancy of their soul's affinities, even as they believed in Caesar's wife, saw their happy dreams shattered, for all the Roman maidens were as crazy over Mars as the women of America are over the great General John J. Pershing. Petted and lionized, and perhaps kissed, by the belles of Rome, Mars lost his love for the growing corn and lowing herds, and the pastoral scenes lost their attraction for Mars. And so, when the war was over Mars wouldn't go back to his crops and herds, but remained in Rome and waited for another war. And, from an agricultural deity, Mars was changed to a god of war. In my humble opinion he should have been humiliated far more than he was, and if any month should have borne his name, surely that month should have been the last on the calendar. It is impossible for the man who goes up against the high prices of today, and the ruin which has come to so many through the periods of industrial unrest, to think much of the god of war, or of the month that bears his name.

But March hath its beauties that other months do not reveal. It is in March that the ugly bulb which has remained pulseless in the cold earth for many months sends forth its stately banners and hangs upon them all the delicate shades of color and scents them with the sweetest odors. It is in March that the birds come back to sing and the tender leaves of the maple come forth and, sifting through them, the sunshine traces lace work of matchless beauty on the door step. And then, with the strong winds of March come the greatest calf shows of all the year. But even with these glories, we are all glad when March takes its departure and the world is given something more substantial and less windy.

Speaking further of Mars, I find no pleasure in the fact that our own dear country is upon the eve of establishing communication with that planet. The word has come that a rocket has been made that can be shot to Mars; that the rocket has a carrying capacity of two men, and that two men have already volunteered their services to make the journey. Can any good come of mixing and mingling with the descendants of one who preferred war to peace,

and who quit the farm to become a consumer of the non-productive class. The Martians no doubt can teach us to shoot further and quicker, but we know too much of the ways of war already. They can tell us how to start a war with the Italians and Mexicans, and how to win the wars after they are started, but just now we do not need the companionship of men whose forefather deserted the fields for the uniform. We need, above all other things, men who can find pleasure in guiding the meanderings of old Beck up and down the corn rows—men who prefer the quiet joys of farm life to the bright lights of the city or the high wages of the oil fields. Since Mars moves slower than the earth in its journeys around the sun, it is by no means probable that the Martians could inspire us to accelerated movements in the work of growing something to eat or manufacturing the implements of peace. 'Tis true that March has two moons, but this fact might serve to confuse people who plant potatoes by the moon and further retard production of eatables. Besides, we are just getting away from the period when many of our own citizens could see three moons. And so I hope the laws of gravity, or something else, will land the fellows who are to head for Mars in a sky rocket somewhere else.

And so the Allies have agreed for the Germans to try their own criminals, fellows responsible for the war and for the many crimes committed against humanity. This, perhaps, is all the Allies could do, but it makes one think of the courts stepping aside and permitting the prisoners to try one another. We can very well imagine and predict what the verdicts will be. When the fellows responsible for killing hundreds of women and children in the hospitals are brought to trial think what the evidence will be. When the prosecution gives notice that all prosecuting witnesses have testified, witnesses for the defense will come forward and swear that the Germans were shooting at a garrison two miles away, and that the destruction of the hospital was caused by the premature explosion of a shell. The verdict, of course, will be acquittal on the grounds of unavoidable accident. Then the murderers of Edith Cavell will go to trial, and some big German bloot will take the stand and swear that when Edith was killed she was trying to cut a German officer's throat with a butcher knife, and a verdict of killing in self-defense will be rendered. And there you will be.

The daily papers carry the news that the manicurists in a certain city have struck for higher wages. This item will be read with sorrow by some and with great surprise by many. The great majority of men will learn for the first time that manicurists work for

wages. It has been their understanding that the manicurist did her work and then took as much of her patron's wealth as her looks would justify, which in most cases was about all the patron had after reserving enough to purchase a ticket home.

The Missouri congressional race is over and proved a great victory for both parties. It was given out that this race, being the first since the fight over the peace treaty began, would show the sentiment of the people toward the two political parties. The Democrat candidate won, in a safe Democratic district, and the Democrats are confident of electing their candidate for President. The Republicans came as near winning the race as they ever do in that district, which is positive proof that the people will elect a Republican candidate in November.

Dallas and Fort Worth are strong rivals along many lines, which causes us to look rather impatiently for the census returns of these great cities, with the understanding, of course, that the full census reports are to be printed. It will be interesting to read the returns and ascertain whether more husbands have been murdered by their wives in Dallas or Fort Worth, and how many wives made a poor shot in 1919. The public would also like to know whether the palm for high room rent goes to Dallas or the Panther City. Late returns place Fort Worth far in the lead in street robberies and this particular race is no longer interesting.

It is well that the prohibition enforcement officers have found that it is a violation of the law to permit saloon signs to remain and are prosecuting those who haven't torn down the signs. If the clause in the prohibition law making the leaving of saloon signs up unlawful had not been found, it was my intention to demand prosecution under the law which provides punishment for cruelty to animals.

The army of propagandists in this country is now so large that it is virtually impossible to hire a crop planted, a nail driven or a shirt washed. I used to say that we should see the golden age when every fellow had a good bank account, but I am now convinced that if I ever see such a time I will have to tote my own freight, patch my own pants, and tote the mortar for the man who repairs my chimney.

The political ball has opened and the people are now busy forcing men to run for office who made up their minds to get in the race last summer.

Early Times in Texas

OR THE ADVENTURES of JACK DOBELL—By J. C. DUVAL.....

CHAPTER XXIV

As soon as breakfast was over, we packed our goods and chattels, mounted our horses and took our way towards a line of high hills to the northwest. Nothing unusual occurred on the route, and about an hour before sunset we ruck the Sabinal creek, several miles below here it breaks through the chain of hills that run in the canon de Uvalde. We had steered, of course, as we thought, directly for the pass, but had expected to camp that night in the canon, but Uncle Seth had been misled as to the precise route by mistaking one high hill for another, in consequence of which, we struck the creek several miles lower down than he intended. As night was so near at hand, we decided to stop, which we did, beneath the shelter of a grove of pecan trees that grew in small valley shut in by small hills. We did not think it worth while to pitch the tent, for with twenty paces of the spot we had selected for our camp, there was a huge flat rock projecting from the bluff, under which we considered we could take shelter if any change of weather should render it necessary to do so. The little valley was covered with a rich growth of wild rye and mesquite grass, on which we fed the animals.

"Boys," said Uncle Seth, "while you're fixin' things 'bout camp, I believe I'll step out and get some 'fresh' for supper."

But just then Willie, who had gone off a short distance to collect some fuel, came running back and reported that there was a bear in a small cave a hundred yards or so above

"Why, how do you know he is in the cave,"

id Lawrence, "did you see him?"

"Yes," said Willie, "I did. He came down a tree close by me and ran into the cave. He had broken off a good many branches from the tree and had thrown them on the ground."

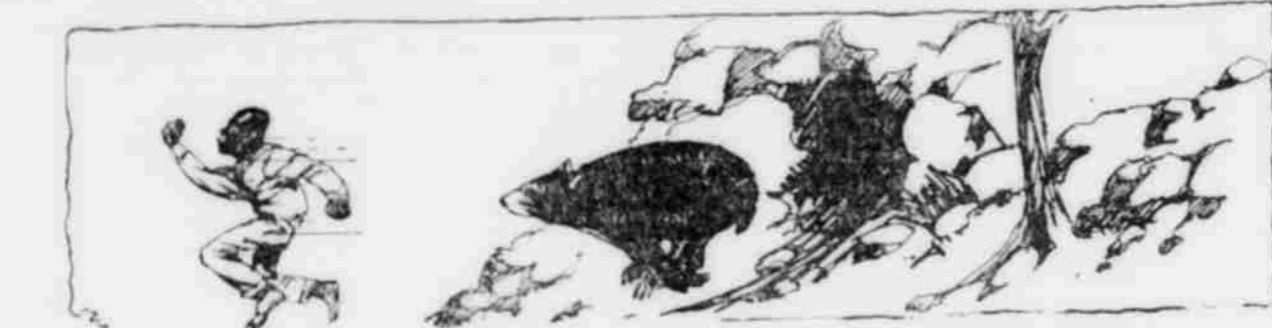
"Oh yes," said Uncle Seth, "he was up there addin', fur at this time of the year they lives mostly on the buds and twigs of some sorts trees. Well boys," said he, "I reckon I'll get out after deer meat, fur bear meat is better, 'evidin' it ain't poor and tough, so we'll go and see if we can't rouse this feller out'n his den."

We were all ready for the sport, and siezing our guns, hurried off to the cave.

"Cudjo," said Uncle Seth to that dusky nevalier Bayard, who had left his pots and atters and snatched up his blunderbuss with evident intention of having a share in the n, "I reckon you'd better bring a chunk of ve along with you, fur I expect we'll have to noke the bar out'n his den."

In a few moments we reached the cave, which was at the foot of a high bluff. The entrance was about as large as a hoghead, and we all anxiously peered into it to see if Mr. ruin was within, but it was so dark inside that nothing was visible beyond a few feet from the opening.

"I don't know how we can get him out of



"CUDJO RUSHED OUT CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY THE BEAR."

his castle," said Henry, "Unless we send Cudjo in after him."

"Fore gracious," said Cudjo, "I ain't gwine inter dat hole if you trow a bag of money down dar."

"Oh, there's no danger," said Henry, "for a bear won't fight in his den."

"Umph! de debil truss him," said Cudjo, "fur I won't."

"Boys," said Uncle Seth, "there ain't but one way to git cuffy out'n that hole, and that is to smoke him out. Let Cudjo start a fire jess inside the cave, and we'll stand outside with our guns, and as soon as the smoke fetches him, we'll all have a pop at him."

Uncle Seth's suggestion was acted on at once, and while Cudjo kindled a fire just within the mouth of the cave, we stood around it with our guns cocked, ready to give cuffy a general fusillade as soon as he should make his appearance. After a while, Cudjo, who was just within the mouth of the cave, called out, "I tink he gib in purty soon now. I hear him sniffin' fur he breath."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when we heard a great "rippit" in the cave, and Cudjo rushed out, closely followed by the bear, that could no longer endure the stifling smoke with which the cave was filled. Bruin, however, was as badly scared as Cudjo, and evidently thought of nothing but making a retreat as speedily as possible; but the moment he showed his snout outside, the contents of half a dozen guns were poured into his carcass, and he fell dead. Cudjo had grabbed his blunderbuss as he came out of the cave, and was just in the act of letting it off at the dead bear when Lawrence stopped him.

"Did you ever see a fellow as scared as Cudjo was when he came from that hole?" said Willie. "He had turned right ashley, and his eyes stuck out of his head like a crabs. Why, you coward," continued Willie, "the bear wasn't after you at all—he only wanted a little fresh air."

"Maybe so," said Cudjo, "but I tink he want some nigger too, fur I see de debil in he eye when he come snorting—day look jess like two ball ob fire—and I tell you what's de fac, Mass Willie, de next time you trees a bar in a hole like dat, you kin jess go in dar and make smoke yourself, fur I ain't gwine to do it agin, certin."

The bear proved to be a young one about half grown, and though not fat, (as they seldom are in the spring of the year), neverthe-

less, was in pretty fair condition. We lugged him into camp, where we butchered him at our leisure, after we had cut off some choice steaks and handed them over to the tender mercies of Cudjo.

"Boys," said Uncle Seth, "you musn't be too hard on Cudjo fur gettin' out'n the way of that bar so quick. I remember mity well I was as bad scared as he was the first time I ever got inter clost quarters with one of 'em."

"How was that?" said Willie, who was always on the qui vivi for a yarn.

"Soon arter I fust come out to Texas," said Uncle Seth, "I concluded I would take a hunt one day on purpose to kill a bar. Well, in the course of the day, I seed one busy rootin' among some dead timber, a hundred yards or sich a matter from where I was. 'Bout half way betwix me and the bar, I noticed a big oak tree that had been blowed down, and as I thought the bar hadn't seed me, I concluded I would cowl up that tree, which would bring me within fifty yards of him, and then, with a dead rest on top of it, I made sure I could fetch him the fust pop. So I got down on my hands and knees and crawled along towards the tree, snaking my gun arter me as I went. I never riz up to look tell I come to the tree, for fear the bar mout see me, but when I got to it, I slowly raised up to take a peep at him, and jess as my head come even with the top of the log, the bar poked hisn over from the other side and our noses almost teched. He gin one yowl and tumbled backwards, and I gin another and tumbled backwards, too, on my side of the fence, and when I had sorter come to, I seed the rascal tearing off like a hurricane fur the swamp. I don't know tell this day which was the wust scared, me or that bar."

The night passed off quietly, and the next morning after an early breakfast, we packed up as much of the bear meat as we could carry, and started for the canon de Uvalde some four or five miles distant. Our course was up the creek, and the country we passed over was rugged and broken, and intersected in some places by deep gulches which were difficult to cross, but at length we came to the "pass" and began to ascend the high rocky ridge that shut in the valley on the south, along a very narrow trail, hardly wide enough at any place for two horses to travel abreast. After toiling up this rugged pass for some time, we finally reached the highest point, and the whole valley of the

Uvalde came at once into view, extending northwardly as far as we could see, and surrounded on all sides by precipitous rugged hills, covered with stunted cedars and other kinds of shrubs. On a small plateau of ground, the very apex of the high ridge we had ascended, we all halted a moment to look at the beautiful Texas valley, spread out like a map before us. It was indeed a charming and romantic scene that presented itself to our sight—one I had never seen surpassed, even among the mountains and valleys of the Blue Ridge of Virginia. The valley was about twenty-five miles in length, and varying from two to five in breadth. The Sabinal (Cypress) a clear, rapid stream meandered through it in curves, from side to side, its whole course from the high point where we stood, being plainly marked out by the tall cypress trees growing along its margin. The valley was undulating but not broken, and was dotted here and there with groves of live oaks, pecans, elms, and other forest trees, giving it a parklike appearance. Far away up the valley, Uncle Seth pointed out some dark looking objects which he said were either buffalo or wild cattle. We all took a look at them through Mr. Pitt's spy glass or "bring 'em nigh," as Uncle Seth called it, and satisfied ourselves beyond all doubt that they were buffalo, their shaggy manes and humps being distinctly visible by means of the glass. Descending by a narrow crooked trail very similar to the one we had come up, we at length reached the valley proper, and crossing over to the western side, we pitched camp near the Sabinal, in a large grove of pecan trees, a few hundred yards above the point where the stream had forced its way through the high ridge at the southern extremity of the valley. The pass along the stream, as we afterwards ascertained, was almost impracticable even for a man on foot, for the bed of the creek was obstructed by many huge boulders that had rolled down from the cliffs on each side. In fact, as we found out subsequently, the canon could be entered on horseback at but two points—through the pass we had just traveled and by a similar one at its northwestern termination. Everywhere else we saw, on all sides, only precipitous walls of rock, broken and jagged, and sparsely covered where the inclination was not too great for the accumulation of soil, with a growth of small cedars and various thorny shrubs. In some places, little rivulets poured down the sides of these rocky walls, forming beautiful miniature cascades which sparkled in the sunlight like veins of molten silver. The canon took its name from that of a Spanish officer (Uvalde) who, according to traditions, surprised a large party of Comanche warriors in it, and having taken the precaution to station a force at each of the passes, not one of the Indians escaped.

In the grove where we had stopped, we found the remains of a large Indian encampment—broken lodge poles, numerous pits that had been used for cooking purposes, and quanti-

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